



United States Mission to the OSCE

SACEUR General John Craddock Address to the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference

Vienna, July 2, 2008

Ambassador Parts, Ambassador Turunen, Dr. Järvenpää, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate the engagement of the organisation for security and cooperation in Europe. I think we must all agree that a robust international dialogue is critical in addressing the challenges of today and in preventing the crises of tomorrow.

It is my pleasure to join you here in Vienna. Schnitzel, Schubert and Strauss, and of course, schnapps – a few of my favorite things, and some of the reasons that I so much like the OSCE's venue.

The OSCE – 56 nations from 3 continents – has been, and will continue to be, an excellent forum for international dialogue and partnership – a dialogue and partnership that translates to success on the ground. So I would say to you for that – well done!

Successes in facing challenges such as arms control, border management, combating terrorism, as well as the many other activities of the OSCE, have all benefited from this rich international dialogue and partnership.

The challenges we, the international community, face today in Afghanistan are no exception; the situation there both cries out for – and benefits from – international dialogue and partnership to ensure our collective security. I am of the opinion that the international community – UN, NATO, EU, OSCE – all can, and must, do more in Afghanistan.

NATO remains involved in Afghanistan and elsewhere in our role as a transatlantic security provider. For nearly sixty years NATO has served as a pillar of respect and strength in our world. And although visionary – the founding fathers of NATO foretold the essential role the alliance would play – I doubt they imagined the future as we know it today. Just as I imagine that the early dukes of Austria might have been surprised by the many successes – many crowns in fact – enjoyed by their heirs. Up to 1918 this imperial palace was the centre of the vast empire of the Habsburg dynasty, and while dynasties may have sought titles, tiaras and total domination – NATO seeks merely collective security.

Our alliance has experienced numerous successes peacekeeping in response to natural disasters and in promoting democracy and increased collective security through the process of enlargement.

Moreover, we are succeeding today. In Afghanistan, in Kosovo, in the Mediterranean Sea, and elsewhere, in that NATO is increasing the collective security of its members, its partners, and indeed the whole world.

And we will succeed in the future as well. In recent months we've seen increased national commitment to our alliance. We see nations striving for membership, making astute political marriages *a la* Habsburg, and most recently France is working to renew its relationship, advocating full participation in the structures in NATO.

Indeed, nations within the alliance and beyond recognize the capable collective security provider that our transatlantic alliance is today. An alliance of 26 – soon to be 28 – nations, we currently have robust partnerships with more than 30 other nations in Europe, Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, indeed we span the globe. NATO partners with the OSCE in building security and promoting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, and we are seeing enhanced relations between NATO and the European Union, a relationship that holds so much promise in the role it could play on the international scene.

We are at a critical juncture. What we do today, politically and militarily, will define our future. Much of what NATO can do to address many evolving challenges will no doubt – in fact must – occur at the political level. Certainly, we ought to increase our political dialogue, both within the NATO alliance and beyond it.

If I may now transition to Afghanistan: the UN mandated International Security Assistance Force – ISAF – remains our operational priority. We have more than 52,000 servicemen and women from 40 NATO and non-NATO partner nations on the ground in Afghanistan. Those servicemen and women, and their fellow service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice in that country, have and continue to serve with distinction in answering the alliance's call.

But it is important to remember that NATO's action in Afghanistan is just a part of a comprehensive approach by the greater international community. The OSCE has made indispensable contributions to peace and stability for the past 30 years. It no doubt can play an important role in the campaign to secure and stabilize Afghanistan. No organization can achieve success on its own – cooperation amongst the many donors is essential to enduring progress. And with so much at stake success is without alternative.

Foremost, our very own security is at stake – not only in Afghanistan but here in Europe as well. Just as economies are increasingly interdependent in our globalized world our external and internal security is equally interwoven. Afghanistan is a mission of necessity rather than of choice. Less than a decade ago Afghanistan was a hotbed of terrorism. Mission success is vital to ensure that the Islamic republic of Afghanistan is never again a place that terrorists – trans-national terrorists – call home.

Moreover, the mission of the international community in Afghanistan has a defining effect on the evolution of our relationship with Asia. One need only look to the borders of Afghanistan to recognize the complexity of the geopolitical situation. Pakistan, Iran, China, and the Central Asian republics are all affected by the situation in Afghanistan. Extremism and terrorism continue to threaten stability – in the region and beyond. With so much at stake the unwavering support of the international community in Afghanistan remains essential.

We are making progress in Afghanistan – albeit uneven progress – and not as fast or far-reaching as we’d like, but there is progress. The situation in Afghanistan is complex and it is challenging. The nature of our adversaries, the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the narcotics trade, governmental corruption, and a less than cohesive effort by the international community all contribute to that complexity.

On some occasions I go to great lengths to explain the complexity of ISAF and the NATO role in Afghanistan. As members of the OSCE you are well equipped to understand the extreme complexity of involving many different nations in joint ventures, of trying to gain consensus while serving different political masters and economic realities. There is no doubt – you know complexity.

In the face of that complexity we are making a difference in Afghanistan. And as we continue to confront these and other challenges our ability to make progress grows.

We know that not all stories out of Afghanistan are positive – to understate the obvious. But I contend that the good stories greatly outnumber the bad.

In creating a safe and secure environment ISAF has geographically constrained the opposing militant forces’ ability to conduct sustained activity. It is important to note that 70% of security incidents in 2007 occurred in only 10% – or 40 – of the 396 districts in Afghanistan. These 40 districts are home to only 6% of Afghanistan’s population. So far in 2008, 91% of insurgent activity has been reported in just 8% of districts.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) continues to grow in size and combat capability and now exceeds the size of ISAF. Since this time last year – the ANA has fielded 9 infantry battalions, 4 commando battalions, 6 support battalions, 3 brigade headquarters and 3 aviation units. It now plays a leadership role in 50% of military operations in Afghanistan, and in the most hotly contested regions the ANA participates in more than 90% of all ISAF operations. Today 90% of the Afghan public see their army as an honest and fair institution. 89% believe it has helped to improve security.

The ANA response to the recent prison breakout and alleged Taliban offensive in Kandahar is further testament to the significant improvement in the capability of the ANA. In less than 24 hours the Afghan National Army, using both ISAF and their own airlift, moved an entire battalion of soldiers to Kandahar. They – the ANA – planned, prepared, and executed the move, marshalled upon arrival and further onward deployed to operations in the Argandab district – all done successfully! I submit only a few nations are capable of such a response from a cold start.

In the area of reconstruction and development the education of Afghanistan’s children continues to move forward in most regions. Enrolment exceeds 6 million students according to the latest figures; 41% of those students are females, more than ever before. In 2001, 8% of Afghans had access to some form of healthcare. Today that number exceeds 80%. Child mortality rates have decreased 25 percent since 2001 with more than 16 million vaccinations against childhood diseases have been administered in the last 5 years.

What is the way ahead in Afghanistan? Our engagement there requires a long-term commitment – nations must ensure their citizens understand the value of our effort and understand the need for unwavering dedication.

We –the international community – must strive toward an improved collective, comprehensive effort in Afghanistan. Together we must earnestly support the efforts of Ambassador Kai Eide, the newly appointed special representative of the UN Secretary General for Afghanistan. He is charged with bringing coherency to the international effort in Afghanistan. Without our unwavering support his mandate is unattainable.

Central to my message to you today is the need for training – extensive training to enable the government of Afghanistan to provide for its own security and provide governance of – and for – its citizens. The continued development of the Afghan National Security Forces is crucial to long-term success in Afghanistan.

I have already discussed the successes in the development of the Afghan National Army. In the last two years the size of the army has doubled and its capabilities have improved immeasurably. But unfortunately progress in the development of the Afghan national police force has been less extensive. I believe this is an area in which the OSCE could have a tremendous impact. The OSCE has a proven track record in this area – having successfully trained the police force in Kosovo and border security personnel in Georgia and elsewhere.

The assessment of Afghan national police force currently reads, “needs much improvement.” While it has grown quickly in numbers it continues to lag significantly behind the Afghan national army in professional ability. Police performance must be urgently enhanced. Corruption, criminality, and a lack of qualified leadership continue to plague this key function.

I have seen proposals for OSCE involvement in Afghanistan – proposals that seek to improve national law enforcement capability and increase border security and cross border cooperation. I applaud this effort and both welcome and encourage the engagement of the OSCE in this area, an area that has vast potential to have an enduring effect in this developing nation.

Finally, we – the international community and the Afghan government – must better address the narcotics problem. Quite frankly the current counter-narcotics effort is ineffective! The money from the narcotics trade is feeding the insurgency. It buys weapons and pays fighters – the weapons and fighters that kill soldiers and Afghan citizens alike. It is a cancer – fuelling corruption and the insurgency. The international community, in cooperation with the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, must make counter narcotics efforts a top priority while at the same time increasing our support of the nascent Afghan counter-narcotics force until they have the capacity and capability to do this essential task on their own. This is yet another area in which training by the international community can have a profound and lasting impact on the development of Afghanistan.

Despite the negative reports dominating the airwaves and editorial pages in recent months I remain firm in my judgement and conviction that the effort of the international community in Afghanistan is making a positive difference. We are making the lives of the vast majority of Afghans better, and we are creating the conditions for a better future.

The future is indeed uncertain - and not just in Afghanistan. As uncertainty reigns in our evolving security environment – partnership in the international community remains the cornerstone of our collective security.

Here, just a few blocks from the home of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra – I’m reminded of the words of Yale theologian, Halford Luccock, “*no one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.*”

Our common purposes – the shared goals of the OSCE and NATO – make us valuable partners – and key musicians in the orchestra of peace and security.

Thank you.